

Jesus: Fulfillment of the Jewish Feasts Part 2

This morning we began our study of how Jesus was the fulfillment of the Jewish annual feasts. We examined in depth how He fulfilled the Feast of Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and we now will turn our attention to how Jesus was the fulfillment of the Feast of Firstfruits.

Historically, the Feast of Firstfruits was the day that the Hebrew slaves went down into the Red Sea and emerged alive on the other side, while Pharaoh was swallowed up by the Red Sea. This set the Israelites free as the firstfruits from Egyptian bondage. The Feast of Firstfruits falls on the day after the Sabbath, during the week of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This is the first Sunday after the fifteenth of Nisan. When God brought the children of Israel into the Promised Land, they were to bring the best firstfruits of their harvest and present them to the Lord. Josephus records that the people did not partake of the harvest until the firstfruits were presented (*Antiquities of the Jews* 3.10.5). It is unfortunate that modern Christianity has come to call this feast Easter, whose name is derived from the Babylonian goddess Ishtar. It would be much better and certainly more appropriate to refer to this day as the Feast of the Firstfruits since the Apostle Paul referred to Jesus as the Firstfruits of the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:20-23 [RSV]: **20. But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the Firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21. For as by a man came death, by a Man has come also the resurrection of the dead. 22. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. 23. But each in his own order: Christ the Firstfruits, then at His coming those who belong to Christ.**

Jesus is the Firstfruits. Jesus is first in order and preeminence, just as the offering of fruits is to be the first and contain the “best portion.” He was resurrected on the Feast of Firstfruits, the first day following the Sabbath: **1. Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the sepulcher. 2. And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an Angel of the Lord descended from Heaven and came and rolled back the stone, and sat upon it. 3. His appearance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow. 4. And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. 5. But the Angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid; for I know that you seek Jesus Who was crucified. 6. He is not here; for He has risen, as He said. Come, see the place where He lay.”** (Matthew 28:1-6 [RSV])

Now here is something I had never thought of before, but we are told Jesus became the High Priest of the New Covenant: **2. Therefore He had to be made like His brethren in every respect, so that He might become a merciful and faithful High Priest in the service of God, to make expiation for the sins of the people. 5. So also Christ did not exalt Himself to be made a High Priest, but was appointed by Him Who said to Him, “Thou art My Son, today**

I have begotten Thee”; 6. *as He says also in another place, “Thou art a Priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek.”* 7. *In the days of His flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to Him Who was able to save Him from death, and He was heard for His godly fear.* 8. *Although He was a Son, He learned obedience through what He suffered;* 9. *and being made perfect He became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey Him,* 10. *being designated by God a High Priest after the order of Melchizedek.* (Hebrews 2:17 [RSV]; Hebrews 5:5-10 [RSV])

So here is the part I had never considered before. One of the first acts Jesus did after being installed as the High Priest by God of the New Covenant, if not **THE** first act, was to observe the feasts of Israel and give a firstfruits offering of resurrected **people!** Matthew tells us in Matthew 27:51-53 [RSV], **51. And behold, the curtain of the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom; and the Earth shook, and the rocks were split; 52. the tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, 53. and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many.**

Some scholars believe that the giving of the Law to Moses and the people of Israel occurred on the Feast of Weeks. Jesus is the fulfillment of the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost. God instructed the children of Israel to count seven Sabbaths from the day after the first Sabbath during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The day following the forty-ninth day is the Feast of Weeks, on the 6th of the month of Sivan. The forty-nine days are called “The Counting of the Omer.” They connect the Feast of Firstfruits (the barley harvest) with the Feast of Weeks (the beginning of the wheat harvest). On the Feast of Weeks, a wave offering of two loaves of bread made of fine flour and leaven is presented to the Lord.

Following His glorious resurrection, Jesus appeared to His disciples and told them to wait in Jerusalem until He sent forth “**the promise**” of His Father (Luke 24:49). We know the Holy Spirit was given exactly fifty days following Jesus’ resurrection, because the New Testament clearly mentions that it occurred on Pentecost. So fulfilling every detail and minutia of the Law of Moses, Jesus sent the Holy Spirit on the Feast of Weeks, or Pentecost, just as He said He would. **1. When the Day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 2. And suddenly a sound came from Heaven like the rush of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. 3. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire, distributed and resting on each one of them. 4. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.** (Acts 2:1-4 [RSV])

The two loaves of leavened bread offered to God during this feast represent the Jews and Gentiles coming together as one body in Jesus. The fine flour in which the loaves are made represents the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ. The

leaven represents the sin in the lives of the Jews and the Gentiles until Jesus' return.

If the scholars are correct about the giving of the law to Moses, the Feast of Weeks depicts both the giving of the Law and the giving of the Holy Spirit.

The accuracy in which Jesus fulfilled the spring feasts at His first appearance is inescapable! Since Jesus has been seen to fulfill utterly and completely the Jewish feasts of the spring with His first coming, might He also then be said to fulfill utterly and completely the Jewish fall feasts at His Second Coming?

Jesus will fulfill the Feast of Trumpets at His Second Coming. In Numbers 29:1-11 the Feasts of Trumpets is inaugurated and described. In order to understand the Jewish feasts, it is useful to understand the Hebraic mindset in order to better picture the symbolism of Jesus' fulfillment of these feasts. In Jewish eschatology, which means their belief of end of time events, the Feast of Trumpets is a solemn time of self-evaluation. On this day, Jewish tradition believed that God wrote the names of those found completely righteous into the *Book of Life*, those found completely wicked are written into the *Book of Death* and those found neither completely righteous or completely wicked await the Day of Atonement for their judgment.

The Feast of Trumpets is traditionally a two-day feast, celebrated on the first and second days of the Jewish month of Tishri. The Feast of Trumpets is also called Rosh Hashanah or "the head of the year." Jewish people also celebrate this day as the day of the creation of the world. In Numbers 29:1-11, God instructed the Hebrews to observe a holy convocation or appointment on the first day of the seventh month by resting, blowing the trumpets and making offerings by fire to the Lord.

It becomes quite obvious how Jesus will fulfill the Feast of Trumpets upon His Second Coming. Jesus said in Matthew 24:31 [RSV], ***"and He will send out His Angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."*** Now it is very possible that Jesus was referring to the Destruction of Jerusalem here, but it also could be very likely that this is a case of prophecy from Scripture having a dual meaning.

The catching away of those who believe in Jesus, commonly referred to as "the rapture," is clearly associated with the sound of the trumpet, as can be seen by reading the following Scriptures:

16. For the Lord Himself will descend from Heaven with a cry of command, with the Archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first; 17. then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the

air; and so we shall always be with the Lord. 18. Therefore comfort one another with these words. (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 [RSV])

51. Lo! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52. in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. (1 Corinthians 15:51-52 [RSV])

Jewish belief in end of time events is consistent with this view. The Jewish Rabbis taught that when 6000 years (or six “days”) of human history are completed, on the seventh day, the Day of the Lord will come. On the Feast of Trumpets, Tishri 1, the ram’s horn will sound and all the righteous, both dead and alive, will be resurrected or changed. The righteous will go to the “gates” for the coronation of the King, Who is the Messiah, and then be united with the Messiah as His bride.

Under the Jewish system, the days between the Feast of Trumpets and the Day of Atonement are called “the Days of Awe,” **yamim noraim** in Hebrew. The Days of Awe are devoted to self-examination and repentance from one’s sin and preparation for judgment on the Day of Atonement. In Jewish eschatology, “the Days of Awe” were representative of a “**day of trouble**” as is described in Jeremiah 30:6 that was to come upon the Earth before the Second Coming of the Messiah. This “**day of trouble**” is also referred to as the “birthpangs of the Messiah.” During that time of trouble on Earth, the Lord will protect His bride: “**For He will hide me in His shelter in the day of trouble; He will conceal me under the cover of His tent, He will set me high upon a rock.**” (Psalm 27:5 [RSV]) We see this fulfilled in the Destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 when not a single Christian lost his or her life at the great and terrible event because of the warnings of the Lord, but once again, it is possible that these passages could serve a purpose as a dual prophecy.

Rabbis have taught and influenced much thought in Christendom that after being resurrected on the Feast of Trumpets, the righteous would enter the **chupah**, or wedding canopy, to spend seven years while the “**day of trouble**,” the seven years of judgment, occurs on Earth. By examining an ancient Jewish wedding, we can more clearly see the picture of the union of the church (the Bride) with the Messiah. When a man in ancient Israel married, he went to the bride’s house with a “bride price” and made a contract (covenant) with the girl’s father. If the father accepted the man and his bride price, the man would pour a glass of wine. If the girl drank it, it would indicate that she accepted the man’s proposal and they were betrothed. The man would go away and prepare a wedding chamber for his bride. When the man’s father deemed that the wedding chamber was ready, usually one to two years later, the man would return to the bride’s house and “steal” her away “**like a thief in the night**” at an hour when no one would suspect, which is also described in Jesus’ *Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins* in Matthew 25. The bridegroom would take her to the wedding chamber

for seven days. During this time, the groom's father would hold a party to announce the marriage. At the end of the seventh day, the married couple would emerge from the chamber and partake of the marriage supper.

The ancient Jewish wedding is an obvious picture of Jesus the Bridegroom and His Bride, the church. The contract (covenant) was sealed at the Last Supper when Jesus shared the covenant cup with His disciples. **“And He said to them, ‘This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.’”** (Mark 14:24 [RSV]) Jesus, in speaking to the disciples after the Last Supper, said the same words that any Jewish man would tell his betrothed: **2. “In My Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? 3. And when I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.”** (John 14:2-3 [RSV])

And, of course, Jesus paid the “bride price” with His life. The marriage of the church to Jesus is described in several Bible texts.

7. “Let us rejoice and exult and give Him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His Bride has made herself ready; 8. it was granted her to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure” – for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. (Revelation 19:7-8 [RSV])

31. “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” 32. This mystery is a profound one, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church; (Ephesians 5:31-32 [RSV]).

Jesus also will fulfill the Feast of the Day of Atonement with His Second Coming. **“On the tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement; it shall be for you a time of holy convocation, and you shall afflict yourselves and present an offering by fire to the Lord.”** (Leviticus 23:27 [RSV])

Jewish end of time beliefs teach that the Day of Atonement is the day in which the people of Israel are to be judged by God and the sins of the nation of Israel are atoned. The Day of Atonement is also referred to as “the Day of Redemption” and “the Day of Judgment.” The people of Israel were instructed in Leviticus 23:32 to confess their sins to God for twenty-four hours prior to the Day of Atonement. On this day, God would either grant or deny atonement for the coming year. As Leviticus 16:29-24 instructed, the high priest was to enter the Holy of Holies to make atonement for the people of Israel. As part of the atonement, two goats were selected. One goat was slain as a sacrificial atonement and the other was called the scapegoat. The scapegoat symbolically bore the sins of the nation of Israel away from the people. It was led into the wilderness and was pushed from a cliff to ensure that it did not inadvertently carry the sins back into the city. Since the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD,

the Day of Atonement cannot be properly observed by the rabbis. Without a proper place of sacrifice, there cannot be a sacrifice. Without a sacrifice there cannot be atonement. The first century rabbis made some substitutions that are supposed to provide for atonement; therefore, the modern observance is very different than the ancient observance. As Christians, we know that Jesus has provided our atonement. Paul tells us in Romans 3:23-26 [RSV], **23. since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24. they are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, 25. Whom God put forward as an expiation by His blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in His divine forbearance He had passed over former sins; 26. it was to prove at the present time that He Himself is righteous and that He justifies him who has faith in Jesus.** And we are told it as at His Second Coming that He will present His Bride to the Father, pure and without spot: **25. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her, 26. that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27. that He might present the church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. 24. Then comes the end, when He delivers the Kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. 25. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. 26. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.** (Ephesians 5:25-27 [RSV]; 1 Corinthians 15:24-26 [RSV])

Since Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of all the Law and the prophets, why would anyone choose to return to the bondage of sin and the requirements of the Law? This was a question which greatly puzzled the Apostle Paul, who wrote to the churches of Galatia, saying, **1. O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? 2. Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? 3. Are you so foolish? Having begun with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh?** (Galatians 3:1-3 [RSV]) He went on to tell those who wished to bind circumcision on those who were at liberty in Christ, **3. I testify again to every man who receives circumcision that he is bound to keep the whole Law. 4. You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the Law; you have fallen away from grace.** (Galatians 5:3-4 [RSV]) Why would Paul make such a harsh statement? He answers this question himself in the next two verses: **5. For through the Spirit, by faith, we wait for the hope of righteousness. 6. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of any avail, but faith working through love.** (Galatians 5:5-6 [RSV])

We will conclude this study of Jesus fulfilling the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles when I return in two weeks.